

**Telecommunication Access Program (TAP) Advisory Board Meeting
April 23, 2015
KCDHH Conference Room**

Members Present: Ms. Becky Crawford, Ms. Mindy McGirt, Mr. Lewis Fowler
Mr. Johnny Lawson, Mr. Jim Timon, and Mr. Jim Stevens

Members Absent: Mr. Forest Skaggs and Ms. Amy Hatzel

Staff Present: Mr. Cole Zulauf, Ms. Jessica Endler, and Ms. Row Holloway

Guests: Ms. Marilyn Fenwick and Ms. Shirley Lawson

Communication

Facilitators: Ms. Shannon Grider, Ms. Molly Howard, and Ms. Laura Kogut

The Chair, Ms. Becky Crawford called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm. Ms. Endler called roll and as there was a quorum; the meeting continued. The board still mourns the passing of Ms. Betty Timon and welcomed Mr. Jim Timon to the board as her replacement. Mr. Zulauf asked the board to introduce themselves and the meeting continued. Minutes from the October 23, 2014 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Lawson (Mr. Fowler) moved to accept the minutes as presented.

Ms. Holloway discussed legislation that passed in this session, House Bill 152, which pertained to deregulation of telecommunications services and allowing companies to invest funds into internet based technologies rather than analog. Rural areas are the exception, as they will be allowed to maintain current analog lines until they move to internet/digital. Most new subdivisions will only have digital and urban areas have already converted most lines. We have expressed our concerns to the larger telephone companies such as AT&T about some alerting devices that must have analog lines, such as Life Alert, heart monitors and the CapTel 840 models. They ensure us that those analog lines will be maintained for as long as the consumer needs it at their current residence. This change allows companies to invest more in broadband rather than maintaining old technology and will be beneficial for our consumers in the long run.

Mr. Zulauf provided the board members with a statistical report of TAP activities since our last meeting. TAP has received 2,637 requests and staff is processing applications as quickly as possible, but there is a waiting list for equipment now, which we hope to have exhausted by the end of the fiscal year. Since the last meeting TAP has distributed 599 pieces of equipment to 461 consumers, with a waiting list of 489 consumers.

TAP saw a spike in requests for equipment since the last meeting, mostly due to the addition of iPads to the program. As a result, the pilot period was terminated effective June 30, 2014 and applicants after that date that had already received equipment within the last four years were denied. Because funds were not available to fulfil the waiting list KCDHH applied for and received an allotment increase for TAP. This will now allow us to order equipment by the end of this fiscal year. The addition of iPads to the program has opened new doors for many speech-impaired consumers and we have seen a big increase in these applicants. The specialized apps on the device allow speech-impaired consumers to

utilize telecommunications effectively through the internet and speech generating technology. We contacted each Speech Language Pathologist to verify that the consumer had the ability to use the device effectively and were not just requesting it as an augmented communication device. Applicants must be 13 years of age to qualify for wireless equipment, so we also had to deny some children that would have benefited from the device in school. We referred them back to their school districts and recommended that they advocate for inclusion of assistive technology in the child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Many of the applicants for landline phones are also on the waiting list and staff has fielded numerous calls about status of ordering equipment.

Vendor contracts for TAP equipment expire in June and bids are being drafted to be submitted to the Finance department in late May. Staff researched new technology, and asked for input from the board and Commissioners. Some models previously used have been discontinued and replacements were recommended from other state's program directors. TAP will continue to provide both landline and wireless devices, although some changes will be made. The newest digital model of the CapTel phone, the 2400i, is being added to the new offerings as well as a different package signaler system that includes a carbon monoxide detector along with the smoke detector. Once the bids are finalized the brochure and website will be updated accordingly.

Staff met with representatives from Amplicon earlier this month and the representatives demonstrated their android tablet, phone and signaling system, which was very impressive and staff will consider including this type of equipment in the bid process.

The Kentucky Assistive Technology Systems (KATS) Network, under the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, has worked in partnership with KCDHH and several other entities to implement the Statewide Hearing Aid Assistance and Reuse Program (SHARP) which assists consumer in obtaining hearing aids. The program works with HEAR NOW and Starkey to recycle, refurbish and redistribute hearing aids, or in some cases purchase new hearing aids. SHARP pays the \$250 application fee only. More than

Mr. Zulauf explained the outreach opportunities provided since January and announced plans to once again showcase equipment at the State Fair in August. KCDHH now has seven equipment cabinets throughout the state, including the newest addition in Paducah. Kentucky continues to be a leader in TAP and other states have reached out to our staff questioning how we obtained funding for wireless equipment, how we added it to our program and how we managed the surge of applications once we added wireless devices.

Ms. Crawford asked members if there were any other items for discussion. Mr. Timon asked about why the Jitterbug is no longer offered and Ms. Holloway explained the problems with the distributor and how they no longer deal with state agencies. Consideration is being made to include the device itself in the new vendor bids. Members asked about the date of the next meeting and agreed to the October 15 date, to coincide with the Telecommunications Relay Service board meeting, as several TAP members also serve on that board. As there were no further items for discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:54 pm.